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*Put Prevention  
Into Practice*

# Staying Healthy at 50+



**AHRQ**

**AARP**

**HRSA**



This booklet was developed by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ, formerly the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research), AARP, and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

AHRQ is the lead Federal agency charged with supporting research designed to improve the quality of health care, reduce its cost, and broaden access to essential services.

AARP is the Nation's leading organization for people age 50 and older. It serves their needs and interests through information and education, advocacy, and community services, which are provided by a network of local chapters and experienced volunteers throughout the country. The organization also offers members a wide range of special benefits and services, including *Modern Maturity* magazine and the monthly *Bulletin*.

HRSA directs national health programs that improve the health of the Nation by assuring quality health care to underserved, vulnerable, and special-need populations.

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*Put Prevention into Practice (PPIP) is a program sponsored by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ, formerly the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research) to increase the appropriate use of clinical preventive services, such as screening tests, immunizations, and counseling. PPIP is derived from the evidence-based recommendations of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, an independent panel of experts in primary health care and prevention convened by AHRQ. PPIP tools enable doctors and other health care providers to determine which services their patients should receive and make it easier for patients to understand and keep track of their preventive care.*

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## Introduction

### About This Booklet

This booklet describes ways that people aged 50 and older can stay healthy. It gives information on:

- Living habits that have been proven to help prevent certain diseases and conditions.
- Screening tests to catch conditions or diseases early, when they can be treated more easily.
- Immunizations (shots) that have been proven to be effective in preventing diseases.

The recommendations in this booklet are based on research reviewed by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, a panel of private sector health experts convened by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ, formerly the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research).

## How This Booklet Is Organized

This booklet:

- Explains why adopting certain healthy habits, such as eating right, can help you. It also explains why you should get certain screening tests or checkups.
- Suggests how you can improve your health habits. It also recommends how often you need certain screening tests, checkups, or shots.
- Presents questions to ask your doctor.
- Provides charts for keeping track of your health care.
- Lists organizations that give more health information.

## How To Take Part in Staying Healthy

This booklet will help guide you in working with your doctor, nurse, or other health professional to stay healthy. It gives you guidelines for how often you may need a specific screening test or exam. But because people have different needs, you need to work with your doctor to discuss which screening tests and shots are right for you

and when you need them. That is why many sections in this booklet suggest you ask your doctor questions. For example, women aged 50 and older should have a mammogram every 1-2 years. But if your mother or sister had breast cancer, you may need a mammogram more often.

In addition to asking your doctor when you need a certain test, you should ask such questions as:

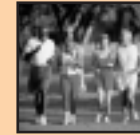
- Why do I need this test?
- How will I benefit from this test?
- Should I have the test done again? If so, why and when?

.....  
Some, but not all, of the information in this booklet will be new to you. For example, you probably know you should not smoke. You also probably know you should be physically active. But many people like to be reminded to do the right thing, and you may be surprised to learn about diseases that could be prevented if you adopt these behaviors.  
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## How To Use This Booklet

**You can use this booklet to:**

1. Learn what you can do to stay healthy.
2. Find out which screening tests you need and how often you need them. Ask why a test is needed and how it can help you.
3. Get ideas for questions to discuss with your doctor or other health professional.
4. Keep track of your health care by using the personal prevention charts at the end of this booklet. You may want to bring this booklet with you every time you see a doctor or other health professional and fill it out before you leave the doctor's office.
5. Learn about other places to find health information.



## Section 1: What You Can Do To Stay Healthy

**Evidence shows that some of the leading causes of death in the United States, such as heart disease, cancer, stroke, some lung diseases, injuries, and HIV/AIDS, often can be prevented by improving personal health habits.**

**Eating right, staying physically active, and not smoking are a few examples of good habits that can help you stay healthy.**

# Creating a Healthy Lifestyle

*Last year, I started walking with a group of women five times a week. We're now up to 3 miles each time. It's both my social and exercise time of the day. I actually miss our time together on the days we don't walk.*

*--Maria W.*



## Eating Right

Eating the right foods and the right amounts of foods can help you live a longer, healthier life.

Research has proven that many illnesses—such as diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure—can be prevented or controlled by eating right. Getting the nutrients you need, such as calcium and iron, and keeping your weight under control can help. Try to balance the calories you get from food with the calories you use through physical activity (for more information about physical activity, see p. 10). It is never too late to start eating right. Here are some helpful tips.

### Eat a variety of foods, especially:

- Vegetables. Choose dark-green leafy and deep-yellow vegetables.

- Fruits. Choose citrus fruits or juices, melons, and berries.
- Dry beans (such as red beans, navy beans, and soybeans), lentils, chickpeas, and peanuts.
- Whole grains, such as wheat, rice, oats, corn, and barley.
- Whole grain breads and cereals.

### Eat foods low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol, especially:

- Fish.
- Poultry prepared without skin; lean meat.
- Low-fat dairy products.



## Weight Control

Weighing too much or too little can lead to health problems. After age 45, many people gain too much weight. You can

control your weight by eating healthy foods and being physically active. For more information, see the next section, "Physical Activity."

### Ask your health care professional:

- What is a healthy weight for me?

- What are some ways I can control my weight?

Keep track of your weight. Use your personal prevention chart (see page 52).



## Physical Activity

Research shows that physical activity can help prevent at least six diseases: heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity (excess

weight), diabetes, osteoporosis, and mental disorders, such as depression. Physical activity also will help you feel better and stay at a healthy weight. Research suggests that brisk walking can be just as good for you as an activity such as jogging. Try to do a total of 30 minutes of constant physical activity, such as fast walking, most days of the week.

### Before you start being physically active:

- Talk with your doctor about ways to get started.
- Choose something that fits into your daily life, such as walking, gardening, raking leaves, or even washing windows.
- Choose an activity you like, such as dancing or swimming.

- Try a new activity, like biking.
- Ask a friend to start with you, or join a group.

### Don't quit:

- Make time for physical activity, start slowly, and keep at it.
- If the weather is bad, try an exercise show on TV, watch an exercise tape in your home, walk in the mall, or work around the house.

## Safe Sex

### Sexually transmitted diseases

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), such as herpes, syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia, are passed easily from one person to the next through sexual intercourse. STDs are more common in people under the age of 50. But, if you or your partner have other sexual partners, you are at risk for STDs. You can lower your chances of getting an STD by using a latex condom every time you have sex. If you have not taken this step, you may need testing for STDs.

### HIV and AIDS

AIDS is a disease that breaks down the body's ability to fight infection and illness. AIDS is



caused by the HIV virus. By preventing HIV infection, you can prevent AIDS.

People in midlife and those who are older can become infected with HIV. In fact, 10% of all AIDS cases in the United States have occurred in people over the age of 50.

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**How do you get HIV?**

People get HIV by coming into contact with the blood or body fluids (semen or vaginal fluid) of a person with HIV. You cannot get infected with HIV from casual contact, such as shaking hands or hugging.

If you or your partner have other sexual partners or if you share needles or syringes, you may need testing for HIV. To protect yourself, use a latex condom every time you have sex and do not share needles or syringes.

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## Taking Charge of Your Health

*Since I have been taking medicine to lower my cholesterol and treat my arthritis, I have been feeling tired and have had an upset stomach. I didn't know which medicine was causing me to feel this way. I was also getting confused about when I should take each medicine. I brought in the booklet "Prescriptions Medicines and You" and asked the doctor the questions in the booklet. I wrote down the answers. Then, the doctor and I talked about what I could do to prevent the side effects from the medicines.*

--Mia C.



### Menopause

Between ages 35 and 50, the levels of two female hormones, estrogen and progesterone, start to change. The shifting levels of hormones may cause you to skip periods, have irregular bleeding, or both. You may also have such symptoms as hot flashes, mood swings, sleep problems, and painful intercourse. Talk to your doctor about these changes and how to relieve them. You can still get pregnant during this time, so you may want to use some method of birth control.



Menopause occurs when you stop menstruating for good. Most women reach menopause in their late 40s or early 50s. If you have not had a period for at least 1 year, you are likely to be in menopause. At this point, your hormone levels drop so you are no longer producing eggs. Once this happens, there is no chance of becoming pregnant.

You can take a pill or use a skin patch that contains the hormones estrogen and progesterone to help relieve some symptoms of menopause. Taking these hormones is called hormone replacement therapy (HRT). HRT also may help keep your bones strong and prevent heart disease. But HRT also has risks—it is not for everyone. Talk to your doctor to see whether HRT is right for you.



## Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is a condition in which the bones break easily. About 70% of fractures in people over the age of 45 are related to osteoporosis. Osteoporosis is more common in women than in men. The loss of hormones that occurs after women have gone through menopause causes their bones to become less dense, or thinner, and therefore more prone to breaking.

### You can help prevent osteoporosis by:

- Doing weight-bearing exercises, such as walking, stair climbing, jogging, yoga, and lifting weights.
- Getting 1,000-1,300 mg of calcium per day (see page 16).
- Not smoking.
- Taking hormone replacement therapy (HRT).

### Ask your health care provider:

- How can I get enough calcium?
- What medicines, such as HRT (for women), can help prevent osteoporosis?

A bone density test can help determine whether your bones are prone to breaking. But there is no evidence that a bone density test is needed for everyone. You may want to ask your health care provider if you should receive this test.

## Foods That Can Help You Add Calcium To Your Diet

- Most foods in the milk group (choose lower fat, lower cholesterol foods most often, such as skim milk):
  - Milk and dishes made with milk, such as puddings and soups made with milk.
  - Cheeses, such as mozzarella, cheddar, swiss, and parmesan.
  - Yogurt.
- Canned fish with soft bones, such as sardines, anchovies, and salmon.
- Dark-green leafy vegetables, such as kale, mustard greens, turnip greens, and spinach.
- Tofu, if processed with calcium sulfate. Read the labels.
- Tortillas made from lime-processed corn. Read the labels.

## Injury Prevention

Following basic safety rules can prevent many serious injuries. Here is a checklist to follow to help keep you safe.

### To help protect yourself when you are home:

- ☐ Use smoke detectors in your home. Remember to check the batteries every month. Change the batteries every year.
- ☐ If you keep a gun in your home, lock up the gun and the ammunition separately and keep them out of children's reach.

### To help prevent falls:

- ☐ Make sure that hallways and stairwells are well lit.
- ☐ Remove or repair things that could make you trip, such as loose rugs, electrical cords, and toys.
- ☐ Put handrails and traction strips on stairways and in bathtubs.

### To protect yourself when you are away from home:

- ☐ Always wear seat belts while in the car.
- ☐ Never drive after drinking alcohol.

- ❑ Always wear a safety helmet while riding a motorcycle or bicycle.
- ❑ Be alert for hazards in your workplace and follow all safety rules.



## Taking Medicines

Getting information about the medicines you are taking is important for people of all ages. It will help you get the full

benefits from your medicine. It will also help avoid problems such as taking too much or too little of a medicine. Taking medicine in the wrong way can make you worse instead of better. Here are some questions you may want to ask your doctor or pharmacist.

### About the medicine:

- What is the name of the medicine? Is this the brand or generic name?
- What is the medicine supposed to do?
- What written information is available about the medicine?

### How to take the medicine:

- How and when do I take it—and for how long?
- What foods, drinks, other medicines, or activities should I avoid while taking this medicine?

### Side effects of the medicine:

- What are the possible side effects?
- What should I do if they occur?

To help you keep track of the medicines you are taking, fill in the medicine chart on page 60. You may want to share this with your health care provider and pharmacist.

*Prescription Medicines and You*, published by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), is a free booklet that gives practical tips on how to take medicines safely. It also gives advice on questions to ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist. To get a copy of this brochure, call the AHRQ Publications Clearinghouse at 1-800-358-9295.

# Getting Help When You Need It

*I was having trouble getting up in the mornings and seemed to have less energy than most people my age. Some of my friends started to make comments about my drinking. They tried to make them in a teasing way, but my feelings were hurt. I tried to tell myself that I didn't have a problem because I went to work every day and took care of my family. I felt I was a social drinker. Finally, I decided that I needed to do something about my drinking. I asked my doctor where to get help. I got the help I needed and now feel very proud of myself for taking control of my drinking problem.*  
--Mike F.



## Alcohol and Other Drug Use

Abusing alcohol or using illegal drugs can cause serious medical and personal problems. Alcohol

and drug abuse can lead to motor vehicle and other accidents, depression, and can cause problems with friends, family, and work. Drug use can cause heart and breathing problems. Alcohol abuse can cause liver and heart problems and throat and mouth cancer.

## Advice on Alcohol and Other Drug Use:

- Don't use illegal (street) drugs of any kind, at any time.
- If you drink alcohol, limit the number of alcoholic drinks—no more than one drink a day for women and two drinks a day for men.
- Do not drink alcohol before or while driving a motor vehicle or operating heavy machinery.
- If you have concerns about your alcohol or drug use, talk to your doctor.

Read the questions below. A “yes” answer to any of the questions may be a warning sign that you have a drinking problem. Talk to your doctor or other health care provider. Place a check mark next to each question for which the answer is “yes.”

- ☐ Have you ever felt that you should cut down on your drinking?
- ☐ Have people annoyed you by criticizing your drinking?
- ☐ Have you ever felt bad or guilty about drinking?
- ☐ Have you ever had a drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or to get rid of a hangover?



## Smoking

Research shows that smoking causes more major diseases than any other personal habit. Some examples are cancers of the lung, mouth, bladder, and throat; heart and lung disease; and strokes. If you stop smoking, you can help avoid these diseases.

It is never too late to stop smoking. Half of all people who have ever smoked have quit.

### When you are getting ready to quit:

- Pick a date to quit.
- Begin by not smoking in places where you spend a lot of time, such as at home or in the car.
- Get support and encouragement—you may want to join a quit smoking program.
- Talk with your doctor about using nicotine replacement products such as gum, patch, nasal spray, or inhaler. Research shows that almost everyone can benefit from using these products.

### Once you have quit:

- Don't try even one puff, and try to keep yourself away from all cigarettes.
- If you fail the first time, don't give up. Keep trying and learn from your experiences. Ask yourself what helped or did not help you in trying to quit.

Every time children and others you care about are around cigarette smoke, they breathe in poisons that can cause asthma or cancer. Please, don't expose others to secondhand smoke. Quit for them.

## Overcoming Depression

Everybody feels “down” or “blue” at times. But, if these feelings are very strong or last for most of the day, nearly every day, they may be due to a medical illness called depression.

The good news is that depression can be treated. But first you have to know you have it.

People do not always know the warning signs of depression. Some of these signs are listed on page 24. If you have four or more, be sure to talk to your doctor about depression. Place a check mark next to each sign that you have.

## Warning Signs of Depression

### Changes in the way you feel:

- ☐ Feeling sad, hopeless, or guilty most of the time.
- ☐ Feeling tired, low energy, or feeling “slowed down.”
- ☐ Crying a lot.
- ☐ Having thoughts of suicide or death.

### Changes in eating and sleeping habits:

- ☐ Sleep problems, either too much or too little.
- ☐ Changes in appetite or weight (up or down).

### Changes in your daily living:

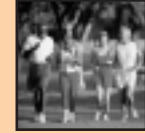
- ☐ Loss of interest and pleasure in daily activities.
- ☐ Problems making decisions or thinking clearly.

## Treatment

The earlier you get treatment for depression, the sooner you will begin to feel better. *The longer you wait, the harder depression is to treat.*

Depression usually is treated with medicine, counseling, or medicine combined with counseling. Medicines for depression are not addicting or habit forming. They work for people with severe depression and may be useful for people with mild to moderate depression. Treatment works gradually over several weeks. If you do not start to feel better after this time, call your doctor. It may take some time to find what works best for you.

For more information, read *Depression Is A Treatable Illness*, a booklet that answers some common questions about depression. To get a copy of this free booklet, written by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), call the AHRQ Publications Clearinghouse at 1-800-358-9295.



## Section 2:

### Ask Your Doctor About Checkups, Tests, and Shots You Need

All of the checkups, tests, and shots covered in this booklet have been proven effective in preventing disease, according to scientific evidence.



## Regular Checkups and Care

*I keep track of when my pets need their checkups better than I keep track of when I need my checkups. I can't seem to remember when I need to visit the dentist or get my eyes checked next. So I started to ask my dentist and doctor when I needed my next appointment. I write it down in the personal prevention chart in Staying Healthy at 50+.*

*--Brian T.*

### Teeth and Gums

- Visit your dentist once or twice a year for checkups.
- Brush after meals with a toothbrush that has soft or medium bristles.
- Use toothpaste with fluoride.
- Use dental floss every day.
- Eat fewer sweets, especially between meals.
- Do not smoke or chew tobacco products.

Keep track of when you need your next dentist appointment. Use your personal prevention chart on page 52.



### Hearing

Hearing loss is one of the most common health problems. Because it doesn't cause pain and is not visible, many people refuse to admit that it exists.

Hearing loss increases after the age of 50. How can you tell if you have a hearing problem? You may have to strain to hear a normal conversation. Or you may find yourself turning up the volume of the TV and radio so loud that others complain.

Talk to your doctor or nurse about your hearing. They may suggest a hearing test. Hearing aids can often help you hear better.



### Vision

People aged 45 and older are most affected by vision problems. By age 65, you should see an eye doctor for regular eye exams.

Eyeglasses or contact lenses can improve your vision. Doctors also have other methods to improve your vision and prevent you from losing your sight.

### Ask your doctor:

- How often do I need to have my eyes checked?

Keep track of when you need your next eye doctor appointment. Use your personal prevention chart on page 52.

## Glaucoma

After age 45, glaucoma becomes more common than it is earlier in life. It is a disease that can lead to problems seeing and even to loss of vision. Early treatment—with medicine, surgery, or both—can prevent or delay the serious vision problems caused by glaucoma.

You are more likely to get glaucoma, and you should see an eye doctor for a glaucoma test, if you:

- Have diabetes.
- Have a family history of glaucoma.
- Are over age 65.
- Are over age 40 and African American.

## Tests To Catch Diseases or Conditions Early

*Last year, my doctor told me I have a high cholesterol level. The doctor said to eat the right foods, lose weight, and exercise. I was worried about having a heart attack but I didn't know where to begin. So I went back to my doctor and talked with him about a plan for taking better care of myself.*

*--Bernice K.*



## Blood Pressure

High blood pressure can lead to heart disease, stroke, and kidney disease. It is most common in African Americans and people over age 45.

Scientific evidence has shown that eating healthy foods and being active are two ways you can keep your blood pressure under control. See the sections “Eating Right” on page 8 and “Physical Activity” on page 10 for more information. Some people need to take medicine to keep their blood pressure at healthy levels. If you take medicine, be sure to talk to your doctor about how to take it. Do not skip any doses of medicine.

### Ask your doctor:

- How often should I have my blood pressure checked?
- What should my blood pressure be?

Keep track of your blood pressure. Use your personal prevention chart on page 52.

## Cholesterol

Too much cholesterol, which can clog your blood vessels, is a major cause of heart disease in men and women. Cholesterol levels start to increase in middle-aged men, in women just before menopause, and in people who have gained weight. The risk of heart disease starts to increase in middle-aged men and women.

Research shows that you can lower your cholesterol level and keep a healthy level by eating the right foods, losing extra weight, and being physically active. See the sections “Eating Right” on page 8 and “Physical Activity” on page 10 for more information. Your doctor or other health care provider may suggest you take medicine to lower your cholesterol.

Most experts recommend checking your cholesterol every 5 years. Your health care provider may suggest you have it checked more often, especially if your cholesterol is too high.

### Ask your health care provider:

- How often should I have my cholesterol checked?
- What is a healthy cholesterol level for me?

If you have high cholesterol, talk with your doctor about a plan for lowering it.

Keep track of your cholesterol level. Use your personal prevention chart on page 52.



## Diabetes (High Blood Sugar)

Diabetes can lead to problems with vision, kidneys, and how well your blood circulates, especially to the lower legs and feet. Most people who have diabetes have type 2 diabetes, the kind that tends to come in middle age. Finding and treating diabetes early can cut your risk for these problems.

The chances of getting the most common type of diabetes—type 2 diabetes—increase once you reach age 45. Almost 1 in 5 people aged 65-74 has diabetes.

### You may need a blood test for diabetes if you:

- Have a family member with diabetes.

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## If You Have Diabetes

Ask your health care provider when you need checkups, tests, and vaccines:

- Eye and dental exams.
- Blood pressure and cholesterol checks.
- Blood sugar (glucose) checks.
- Yearly flu shots.

Ask your health care provider about ways to prevent problems:

- What is the right weight for me?  
Try to stay at that weight.
  - What kinds and amounts of food are right for me?
  - If you take medicine for diabetes:  
How much medicine should I take?  
When should I take it?
  - If you smoke: What can I do that will help me stop smoking?
  - How should I take care of my feet?  
How do I check for loss of feeling in my feet? If there is loss of feeling, you should report it to your doctor.
- .....

- Are overweight.
- Have had diabetes during pregnancy.

## Tuberculosis (TB)

TB is a growing problem in the United States, especially among older people. It is an infection that affects the lungs and eventually other parts of the body. This infection can be passed from one person to the next. It is treated more easily if caught early.

**You are at greater risk for TB and may need a TB test (called a PPD) if you have:**

- Been in close contact with someone who has TB.
- Recently moved from Asia, Africa, Central or South America, or the Pacific Islands.
- Kidney failure, diabetes, HIV, or alcoholism.
- Injected or now inject illegal drugs.

# Tests To Find Cancers

*I knew some of my friends were getting tested for colon cancer. But I didn't think it was very important because no one in my family has had colon cancer. Then a good friend of mine was diagnosed with colon cancer and had no family history of it. So I decided to ask my doctor about colon cancer testing. She told me that all people over age 50 need to be tested and then continue to be tested every 5-10 years, depending upon their situation.*

*--Sam O.*

## Breast Cancer

As women get older, their chances of getting breast cancer increase. In fact, most breast cancers occur in women over the age of 50.

Research shows that the best way to find breast cancer is to get a mammogram. This is an x-ray test that can find a breast cancer when it is so small that it cannot be felt. Most breast cancers are treated more easily when found early.

All women aged 50 and older should have a mammogram every 1 to 2 years. This recommendation is based on scientific evidence. Ask your doctor how often you need a

mammogram. Make sure to tell your doctor if your mother or a sister has had breast cancer. If so, you may need to have mammograms more often than other women. Your doctor may also examine your breasts.

### Ask your doctor:

- How often do I need a mammogram?

Keep track of your mammograms. Use your cancer test chart on page 54.

## Cancer of the Cervix

All sexually active women are at risk for cancer of the cervix. Most deaths from cancer of the cervix can be prevented if the cancer is found and treated early. A Pap test can find cancer of the cervix early—while it's easier to cure. This simple test saves lives.

Based on scientific evidence, women need to have a Pap test every 3 years, some more often. Set a date with your doctor to get a Pap test.

### Your doctor may suggest stopping Pap tests if:

- You are over age 65 and have had regular, normal Pap tests.
- You have had a hysterectomy.

Tell your doctor if you have had genital warts, a sexually transmitted disease (STD), multiple sex partners, or abnormal Pap tests. If so, you may need Pap tests more often than other women.

### Ask your doctor:

- How often do I need a Pap test?

Keep track of your Pap tests. Use your cancer test chart on page 54.

## Colon Cancer

Colon cancer is the second leading cause of death from cancer. Older men and women are more likely to get colon cancer than those who are younger. But if caught early, colon cancer can be treated more easily. Effective tests are available to find colon cancer. However, many people do not take advantage of these tests.

Starting at age 50, you should have tests to detect colon cancer. This advice is based on scientific research. The tests you may have are:

**Fecal Occult Blood Test**—To test for small amounts of blood in your stool. This test should be done yearly.

**Sigmoidoscopy**—To look inside the rectum and colon using a small, lighted tube. Your

doctor will do this in the office or clinic. This test should be done once every 5 to 10 years. Tell your doctor if you have had polyps or if you have family member(s) with cancer of the colon, intestine, breast, ovaries, or uterus. If so, you may need to be tested more often.

### Ask your doctor:

- How often do I need these tests?

Keep track of your tests. Use your cancer test chart on page 54.



## Oral Cancer

Oral cancer includes cancers of the lip, tongue, pharynx, and mouth. Most oral cancers occur in people over age 40 who use

tobacco or alcohol. People who are in the sun a lot also are at risk for cancer of the lip.

If you chew or smoke tobacco and drink a lot of alcohol, you may want your dentist to examine your mouth for signs of oral cancer during your regular dental checkup. You may also need to see your dentist more often.

Scientific evidence shows that you can help prevent oral cancer by not smoking and cutting back on the amount of alcohol you drink. If you

are outdoors a lot, you should use a sunblock on your lips.

**Ask your health care provider:**

- How often should I get dental checkups?

Keep track of your dental visits. Use the personal prevention chart on page 52.

## Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer is most common in men over age 50, in African Americans, and in men with a family history of prostate cancer.

Tests such as a rectal exam and PSA (prostate-specific antigen) blood test can help detect prostate cancer. Based on research, it is not yet clear whether these tests save lives.

**Ask your doctor:**

- What are the pros and cons of tests for prostate cancer?

## Skin Cancer

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the United States. Most skin cancers can be cured, especially if they are found and treated early.

**You may need to have your doctor examine your skin if:**

- You have many moles (large freckles).
- You have been in the sun a lot.

**Ways to help prevent skin cancer:**

- Limit the amount of time you spend in the sun, especially between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.
- Wear clothing that protects you from the sun.



# Shots To Prevent Diseases

*I watched some of my relatives suffer through bouts of pneumonia and just hoped it would never happen to me. I finally realized I could do more than hope. I found out about the pneumonia shot. I got the shot last year and now encourage all my friends and relatives to do the same.*

*--Martha A.*

Adults need shots to prevent serious diseases. You should ask your doctor or other health care provider which shots are right for you.

## Influenza (flu) shots

Everyone over age 65 needs this every year.

**You may need flu shots before age 65 if you:**

- Have lung, heart, or kidney disease.
- Have diabetes.
- Have AIDS or are infected with HIV.
- Have cancer.
- Are a health care worker.

## Pneumococcal (pneumonia) shot

Everyone needs this once at about age 65. If you have diseases of the lung, heart, or kidney; diabetes; HIV; or cancer, you may need this shot before age 65.

## Tetanus-diphtheria shot

Everyone needs this every 10 years.

Keep track of the shots you receive. Use the shot charts on pages 56-59.

## Hepatitis B shots

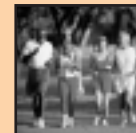
Discuss with your doctor whether you need hepatitis B shots.

**Generally, you should receive hepatitis B shots if you:**

- Or your partner have had other sexual partners within the last 6 months.
- Are a male and have had sex with another male.
- Have had a sexually transmitted disease (STD) within the last 6 months.
- Have injected illegal drugs.

- Are a health care worker who is often exposed to blood or blood products.
- Had blood transfusions between 1978 and 1985.

If you are traveling outside the United States, discuss with your doctor whether you need hepatitis B shots.



## Section 3: For More Information

To learn more about staying healthy and preventing disease, you may want to contact the organizations listed in this section. You can get free information by writing, making toll-free telephone calls, or by searching the Internet.

## **AIDS**

Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention  
(CDC)

CDC National AIDS  
Hotline:  
1-800-342-2437

CDC AIDS Hotline in  
Spanish: 1-800-344-  
7432

CDC AIDS Hotline  
for the Deaf:  
1-800-243-7889 (TTY)

CDC National  
Prevention  
Information Network  
1-800-458-5231  
1-800-243-7012 (TTY)  
<http://www.cdcnpin.org>

## **Alcohol and Drug Abuse**

National Clearinghouse  
for Alcohol and Drug  
Information, Substance  
Abuse and Mental  
Health Services  
Administration,  
U. S. Department of

Health and Human  
Services  
1-800-729-6686  
<http://www.health.org>

National Institute on  
Alcohol Abuse and  
Alcoholism (NIAAA),  
National Institutes of  
Health  
301-443-3860  
<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov>

**Alzheimer's Disease**  
Alzheimer's Association  
1-800-272-3900  
<http://www.alz.org>

Alzheimer's Disease  
Education and Referral  
Center (ADEAR),  
National Institute on  
Aging, National Institutes  
of Health  
1-800-438-4380  
<http://www.alzheimers.org/adear>

## **Cancer**

Cancer Information  
Service (CIS), National  
Cancer Institute (NCI),  
National Institutes of  
Health

1-800-4-CANCER  
(1-800-422-6237)  
1-800-332-8615 (TTY)  
<http://www.nci.nih.gov>

## **Diabetes**

Lower Extremity  
Amputation Prevention  
Program (LEAP),  
Bureau of Primary  
Health Care, Health  
Resources and Services  
Administration, U.S.  
Department of Health  
and Human Services  
1-800-400-2742  
<http://www.bphc.hrsa.gov/leap>

National Institute of  
Diabetes and Digestive  
and Kidney Diseases,  
National Institutes of  
Health  
301-496-3583  
<http://www.niddk.nih.gov>

## **General Health Information**

Administration on Aging  
(AoA), U. S. Department  
of Health and Human  
Services

202-619-7501  
National Aging  
Information Center  
<http://www.aoa.dhhs.gov/elderpage.html>

Agency for Healthcare  
Research and Quality  
(AHRQ), U.S.  
Department of Health  
and Human Services  
1-800-358-9295  
<http://www.ahrq.gov>

AARP  
1-800-424-3410  
1-877-434-7598 (TTY)  
<http://www.aarp.org>

Healthfinder  
Provides electronic  
information on a wide  
variety of health topics.  
Can direct you to  
medical journals and  
other publications,  
clearinghouses, databases,  
hot lines, medical  
research, support groups,  
organizations, and  
libraries.  
<http://www.healthfinder.gov>

National Institute on Aging Information Center, National Institutes of Health  
1-800-222-2225  
<http://www.nih.gov/nia>

National Women's Health Information Center, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
1-800-994-9662  
<http://www.4women.gov>

### **Hearing**

National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Diseases, National Institutes of Health  
1-800-241-1044  
1-800-241-1055 (TTY)  
<http://www.nih.gov/nidcd>

### **Heart, Lung, and Blood Diseases**

Information Center, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, National Institutes of Health  
1-800-575-9355  
<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov>

### **Mental Health**

National Institute of Mental Health, National Institutes of Health  
1-800-647-2642 (English and Spanish)  
1-888-826-9438  
(Information on anxiety disorders)  
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

### **Depression**

Depression Awareness, Recognition, and Treatment (D/ART) Program  
National Institute of Mental Health, National Institutes of Health  
1-800-421-4211  
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

### **Nutrition**

Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Office of Consumer Affairs  
1-888-463-6332  
<http://www.fda.gov>  
<http://www.fda.gov/oc/olderpersons/>

### **Osteoporosis**

Osteoporosis and Related Bone Disorders, National Resource Center, National Institutes of Health  
1-800-624-BONE  
(1-800-624-2663)  
<http://www.osteoporosis.org>

### **Stroke**

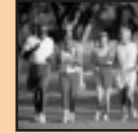
National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, National Institutes of Health  
1-800-354-2611  
<http://www.ninds.nih.gov>

### **Urinary Problems**

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, National Institutes of Health  
1-800-496-3583  
<http://www.niddk.nih.gov>

### **Vision**

National Eye Institute, National Institutes of Health  
1-800-527-5248  
<http://www.nei.nih.gov>



## Section 4:

### Personal Prevention Charts

Ask your health care provider how often you need each type of care and the goal you should reach. Then write down the information in these charts. Also, write down the date and results of the care you get or ask your doctor to write down this information. Try to remember to bring the booklet with you each time you see a health care provider. These charts will help you keep track of when you need your next test or checkup and will help you keep track of the medicines you are taking.

## Personal Prevention Chart

Type of Care	How Often	Goal	Date and Results					
(example) Blood Pressure	<i>Once a month</i>	<i>130/70</i>	<i>8/12/98</i> <i>140/80</i>					
Blood Pressure								
Cholesterol								
Weight		<i>Healthy</i> <i>weight for me:</i> _____						
Dental Visits								
Vision								

Ask your doctor or other health care provider how often you need each kind of test. Then write down this information in this record. Ask your doctor to write down the date you receive the tests and the results. Try to remember to bring the booklet with you each time you see a doctor. This record will also help you keep track of when you need your next test or checkup.

Cancer Test Chart									
Type of Care	How Often	Date and Results							
Fecal Occult Blood Testing	Once a year	1/9/99 negative							
Mammography									
Pap Smear									
Sigmoidoscopy									



Write down the date you receive each immunization (shot).

Flu Shot Chart

How often	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
Once a year starting at age 65								

# Tetanus Shot Chart

How often	Date	Date
Every 10 yrs.		

# Pneumonia Shot Chart

Once at age 65	Date:
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Write down the name of each medicine you take, the reason you take it, and how you take it, in the spaces below. Add new medicines when you get them. You can show the list to your health care provider and pharmacist. You may want to make copies of the blank form so you can use it again.

Medicine Chart			
Name of Medicine	Reason Taken	Dosage/Date Started	Time (s) of day
Penicillin VK 250 mg	To treat my strep throat	1 tablet 4 times a day started 11/22/99	9 a.m., 1 p.m. 5 p.m., 9 p.m.

Notes

Notes

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The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force—a panel of private sector experts in primary health care and prevention convened by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)—has found that some tests that doctors perform have not been proven effective for healthy, average-risk persons. These tests include the PSA test for prostate cancer, blood tests or ultrasound for ovarian cancer, chest x-ray for lung cancer, urine tests for bladder cancer, routine blood tests for anemia, routine urine tests, and routine electrocardiogram or stress tests for heart disease for people without symptoms. If your doctor or health care provider recommends any of these tests, you may want to ask why you need them. Talk to your doctor or other health professional about what is right for you.

## Personal Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Allergies: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Important Medical Problems: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Doctor's Phone Number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Medical Insurance Number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_